



Perceived Job demands during military deployment: What soldiers say in Afghanistan

MSc. Sylvie Boermans (University of Leuven, Belgium)

Dr. Wim Kamphuis (TNO, the Netherlands)

Dr. Roos Delahaij (TNO, the Netherlands)

Dr. J.E. (Hans) Korteling (TNO, the Netherlands)

Prof. dr. Martin Euwema (University of Leuven, Belgium)

IMTA, Dubrovnic, 2012





Agenda

- › Motivation
- › Procedure
- › Results & Discussion
- › Conclusions
- › Q & A



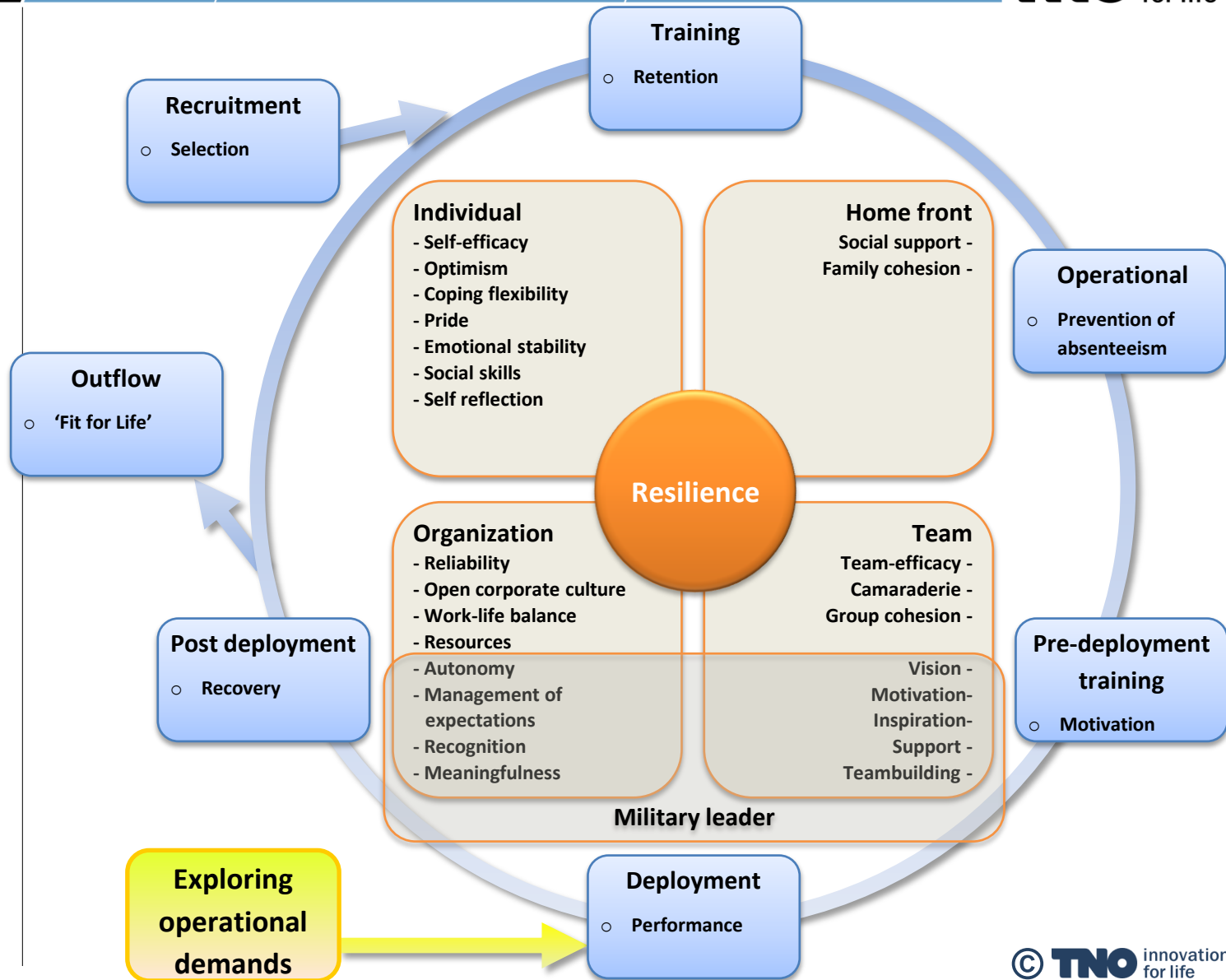


Motivation

Resilience is an interactive concept that implies both positive functioning as well as exposure to adversity.

So what are the demands deployed military personnel face in modern military operation?







Motivation

- › Operational demands has been related to soldiers' mental and physical health, interpersonal functioning and operational effectiveness.
- › So far, no coherent framework (Adler, Litz, & Bartone, 2003; Campbell & Nobel, 2009).
- › We explore a broad range of operational demands across different units, during the recent mission to Afghanistan





Operational demands

- › 6 types of operational demands that are likely to create strain: isolation, ambiguity, powerlessness, boredom, danger, workload (OPTEMPO) (Bartone, 1998; Castro & Adler, 1999)

Key issues that influence the impact of any job demand:

- › cognitive appraisal processes: focus on *perceived* demands
- › job characteristics: comparing distinct units



Procedure

Participants: 1413 Dutch soldiers

4 types of task groups:

- › Combat units (N=694)
- › Combat support units (N=209)
- › Service support units (N=291)
- › Command support units (N=219)



Measure:

- › 23-item self-report questionnaire based on Bartone's framework of operational demands (7-point Likert scale: "*never to always*").
- › half-way through a 4-month deployment to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan between the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010.



Procedure

Analyses strategy:

1. Partial confirmatory factor analyses (promax rotation)
2. Pairwise-comparisons using non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests on factor scores to determine group differences and post-hoc Mann-Whitney U-tests to determine which means differed.





Results & Discussion

We identified 7 factors, however, 1 factor appeared to be correlated due to there low prevalence and was disregarded from the analyses:

- *“Lack of clarity regarding own role”*
- *“Number of missions”*
- *“Combat”*

6 factors were labeled as:

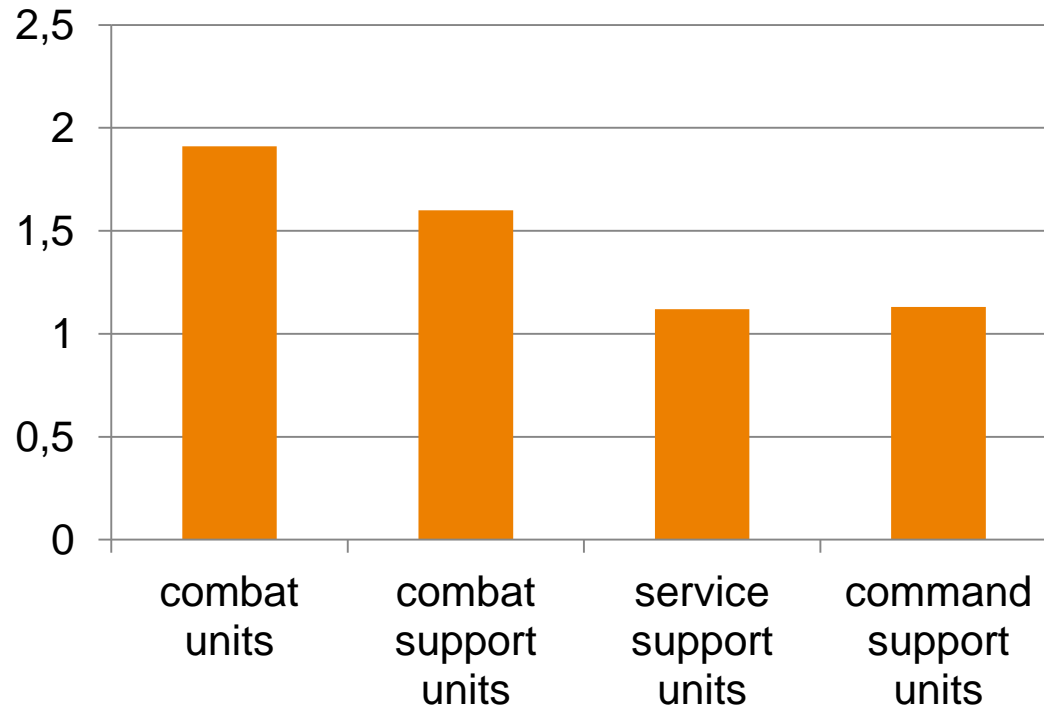
1. Powerlessness and ambiguity ($\alpha = .76$)
2. Workload ($\alpha = .83$)
3. Home front separation ($\alpha = .75$)
4. Boredom – Isolation ($\alpha = .69$)
5. Danger ($\alpha = .83$)
6. Physical environment ($\alpha = .88$)



<i>Item content</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
ROE constrains on response options	2.27	1.98	.77					
Lack of clarity regarding the ROE's	1.05	1.39	.63					
Unresponsive supply chain	1.49	1.41	.55					
Unclear command structure (who decides what?)	1.26	1.49	.54					
Unfair differences between units in theatre	1.51	1.52	.48					
Workload: amount and tempo	0.94	1.40		.84				
Having to be available at all times (24/7)	0.81	1.20		.75				
The work is physically demanding	0.98	1.18		.66				
Separation from the home front	1.82	1.40			.70			
Uncertainty regarding the situation at home	1.05	1.27			.70			
Duration of the mission	0.78	1.15			.61			
Uncertainty regarding return date	1.61	1.75			.54			
Long periods of routine operations	1.20	1.28				.75		
Unfamiliar colleagues due to the composition of the unit	0.96	1.20				.57		
Long periods of lack of work	1.43	1.45				.51		
Deployment location with unfamiliar culture and language	1.09	1.29				.31		
Attacks (e.g. IEDs, missiles or suicide attacks)	1.47	1.52					.84	
Accidents (incl. friendly fire)	0.97	1.31					.82	
Terrain conditions	1.02	1.22						.91
Climatic conditions	1.05	1.20						.86

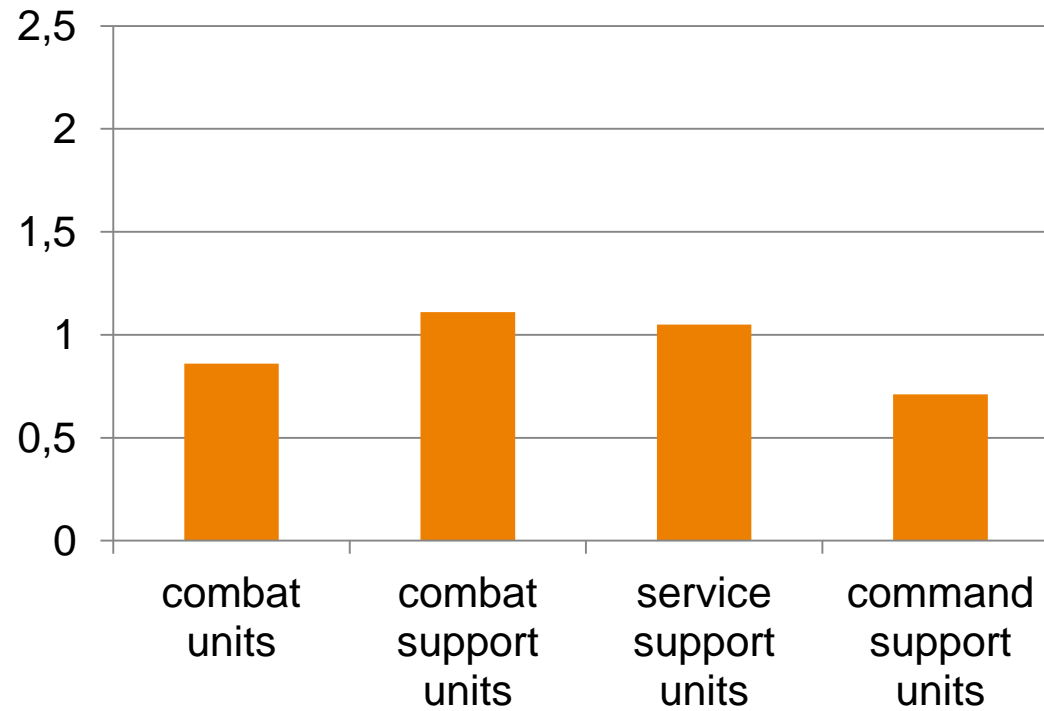


Powerlessness



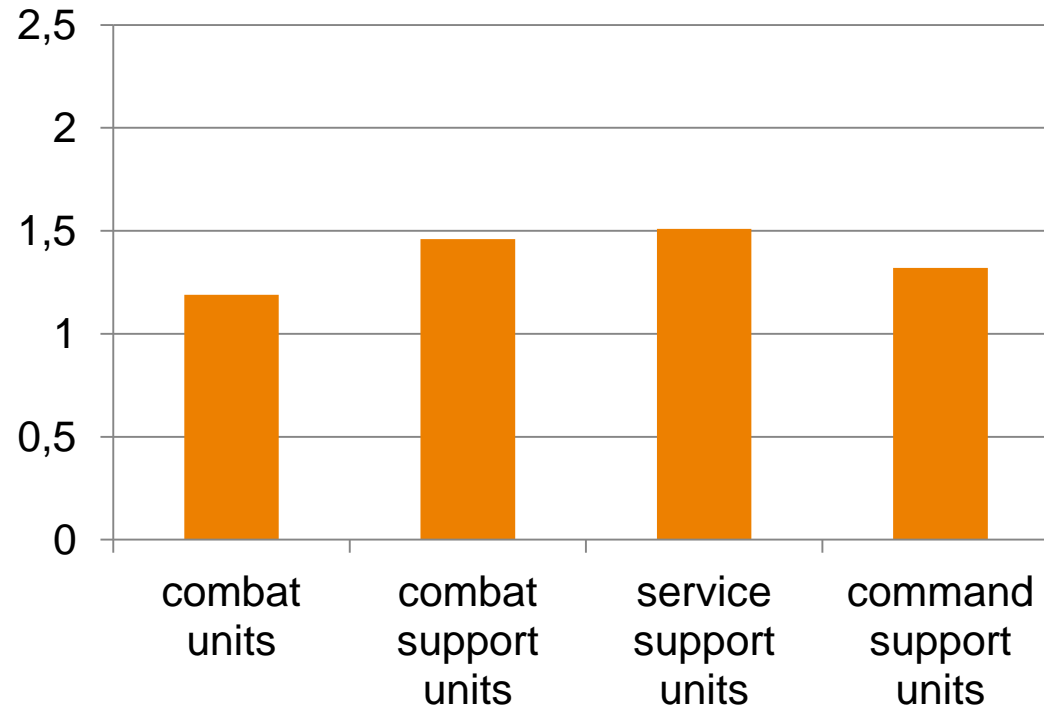


Workload



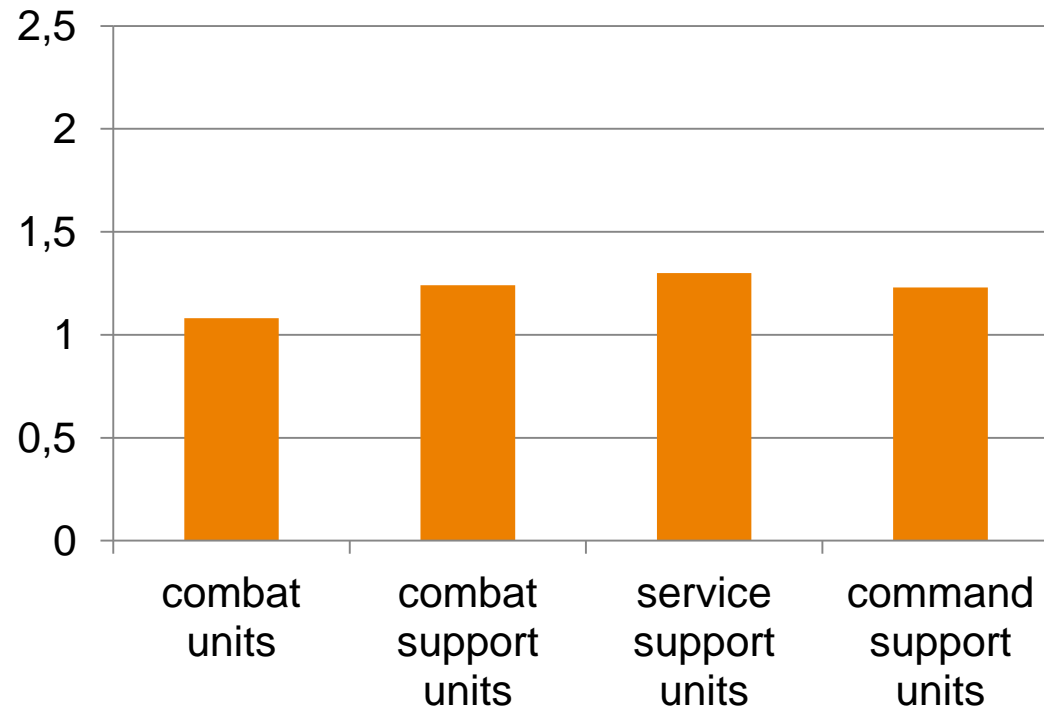


Home front seperation



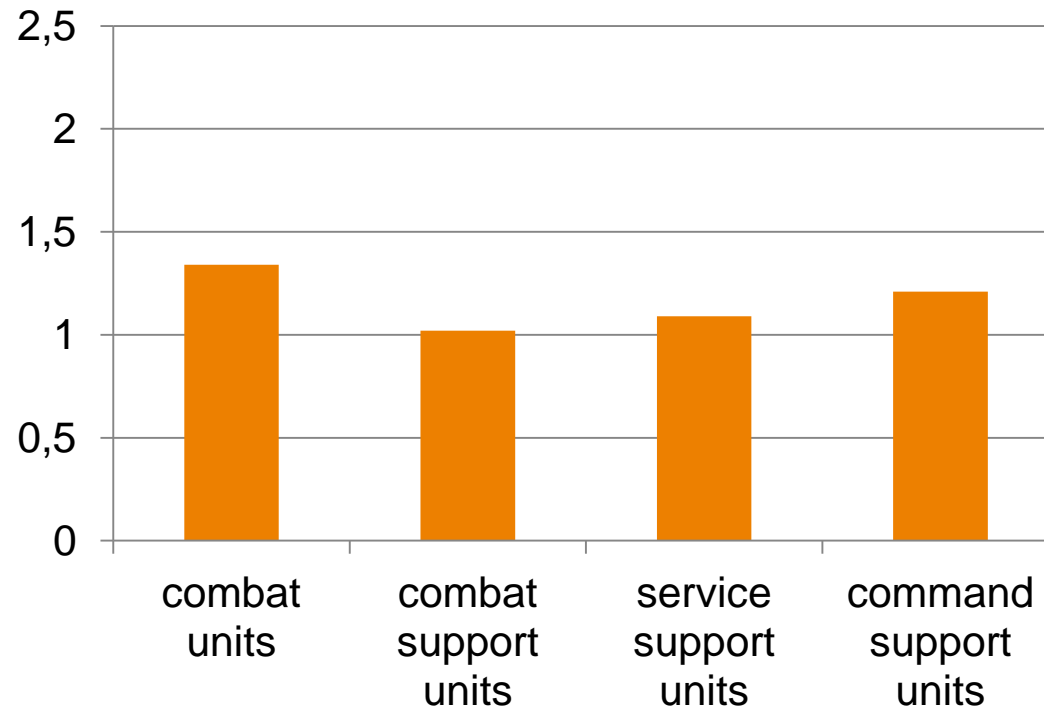


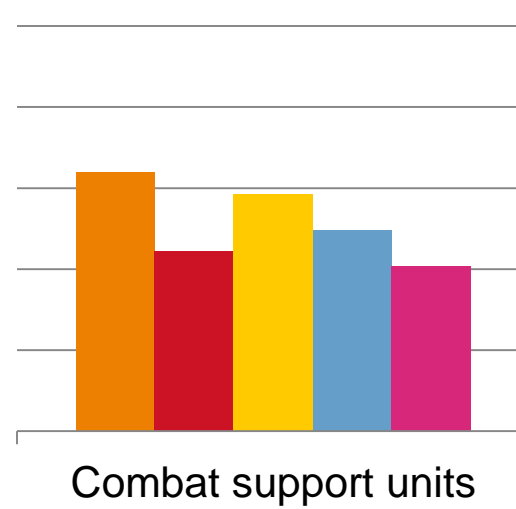
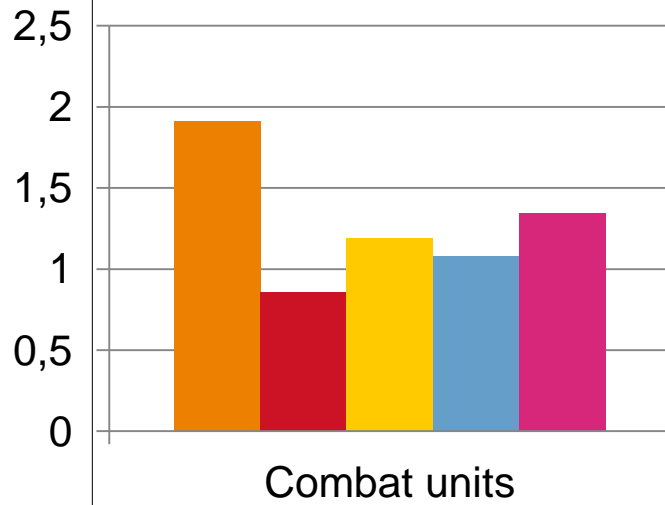
Isolation - Boredom



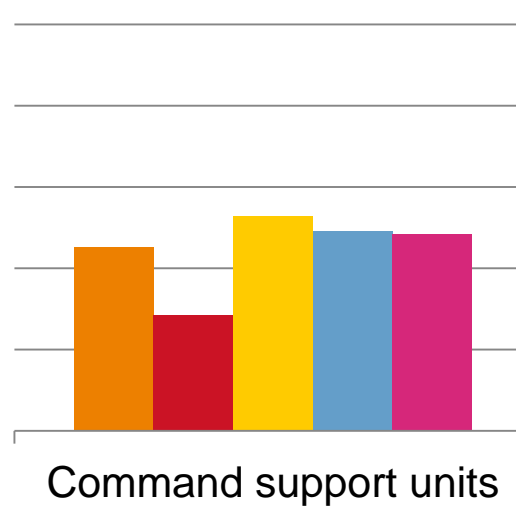
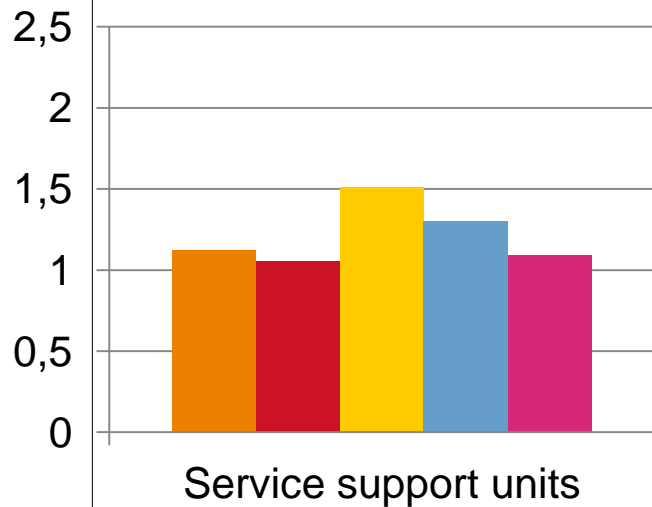


Danger





- Powerlessness
- Workload
- Home front separation
- Isolation - Boredom
- Danger





Discussion

Most notable differences: combat units versus other types of units:

- › Combat units scored highest on powerlessness, and secondly on danger
- › Combat units scored lower on all other factors as compared to all other units
- › Surprisingly, combat support units reported the lowest demands from danger, specifically when compared to combat units.



Limitations

- › Conclusions are based on factor scores: potentially obscuring important differences between items.
- › The list of operational demands is not exhaustive.



Conclusions

- › Distinct units are characterized by its own unique constellation of operational demands.

Practical significance & future research:

- › Advantage of monitoring of a broad range of operational demands:
 - › providing in-time and tailored interventions
 - › Investigating accumulative or interactive effects between different operational demands on short- and long term functioning &
 - › Identifying pathways to buffer the negative effects of operational demands
 - › Secondary traumatization



Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

